ISLAM VERSUS AHL AL KITAB PAST AND PRESENT

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How can we be certain that Islam is the only infallible Truth?

Islam means submission to the will of God through unquestioning obedience to His Law in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Judaism is named after the tribe of Judah and Christianity after Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). Thus even the names of these faiths illustrate their restrictive character. The name of Islam proves its universality. What a contrast to the views expressed during a recently held interfaith conference in Washington D.C. where Dr.Isaac Franck, Executive Vice-President of the Jewish Community Council of Washington said that Judaism considers itself as valid only for Jews and does not attempt to impose its views upon non-Jews. He declared: *"The validity of non-Jewish the theological beliefs is not subject to our evaluation or judgment."* To me this is conclusive proof that Judaism must be false because an omnipotent God would never restrict His truth to a single people. Truth by its very nature must be universal!

Islam is unique among all other religions in that it alone possesses an authentic scriptures. The Holy Quran informs us that the Jews and Christians have corrupted their scriptures by mixing the original revelation with human interpolations and interpretations until the former could not be distinguished from the latter. Under the devastating impact of "Higher Criticism" very few, if any, Jewish or Christian scholars today accept their Holy Books as infallible Divine revelation. Jews and Christians themselves admit that they do not possess their original Texts but only translations that have been undergoing numerous alterations for many centuries and are still being changed. The Holy Quran exists exactly as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet. It has been preserved in its original text forever. The languages of the former revelations to the Jews and Christians have long been dead. Today nobody can speak those languages and only a few scholars claim to be able to decipher them. Even if these scriptures had been preserved to this day in their original and unadulterated form, nobody could correctly understand them and interpret their injunctions, much less translate them into actual practice. In contrast, the language of the Holy Quran is a living language, spoken and understood by millions throughout the world. Even those who have no time to study Arabic, can easily find others who know it sufficiently to explain the meaning of the Quran. Each of the existing sacred books has been addressed to a particular people and contains commandments which seem to have been intended only for a restricted time and place, while the Holy Quran is explicitly addressed to the whole human race with an eternal code embracing life in its totality. The teachings of Judaism are restricted by their nationalist, racist emphasis while the acceptance of secularism on principle virtually negates Christianity's claim to universality.

Concerning the earlier Prophets and religious teachers, very little of their life histories have come down to us. Thus we know less about Moses (peace be upon him) than Socrates and nothing at all concerning Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) before he began his brief three-year career of preaching.

A cursory Glance through any Hadith collection will give an idea how accurately and carefully the minutest details of the Prophet's life teachings have been recorded. There one finds astonishing details of his features, limbs of body, his gait, the manner of his conversation and speech, his smile, dress, food, sleep, his manner of eating, drinking and relaxing, his love for perfumes, his elegance, catholicity, of his taste, his fondness for riding, his zest for worship, his mode of salutation, his facial expression, his behaviour in joy and sorrow, his wars, his way of offering condolence, his mode of offering prayers and observing fasts, his pilgrimages, his intense devotion to God, his noble feelings and sentiments, his perseverance, his dealings with his fellow beings, his honesty, his hospitality, his deep rooted sympathy for his own kith and kin, his dealings with strangers, with enemies, his hatred for back-biting and vanity, his simplicity, his bravery, his determination, his truthfulness, his adherence to his promises, his forgiveness, his behaviour towards his equals, towards his elders and youngers, his treatment of women, his kindness to mankind and animals, his means of livelihood, his experiences as a traveller, as a warrior, as a law-giver, as a father, as a brother, as a ruler, as a saint, as a pious hermit, as an arbitrator; in fact, all phases and aspects of his life have been carefully recorded. One is amazed at the boldness and courage with which he laid open before the people not only his public but also his private life. who can stand the ordeal of voluntarily offering himself as an object of observation for all the twenty-four hours throughout his life?

Only a person of unusual integrity and honesty, possessing a high degree of self-confidence, self-control and self-determination could do it. It was Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who alone can stand this test. He not only permitted people to peep into the innermost chambers of his sacred life but also exhorted them to broadcast its details to others because even these facets were as divinely illuminated as his public career.

A Muslim is therefore enjoined to follow the Prophet's example in his private life with the same sincerity and faithfulness as he is commanded in respect of the sphere of his public life. Every word that he uttered and every action that he performed are the public trust to be faithfully handed over to humanity from generation to generation as Divinely inspired.*

Islam alone constitutes a complete, all-embracing, comprehensive way of life where the individual versus his society and material versus the spiritual are balanced into a perfect harmony. The laws of Islam are called the Shariah that provides an infallible Guidance of all aspects of individual and collective life. The Shariah embraces religious ritual, personal character, morals, intimate habits, family relationships, social and economic affairs, administration, rights and duties of citizens, judicial system, laws of war and peace and international relations. These injunctions enable the faithful to distinguish between what is good and evil, what is beneficial and harmful, what is useful or injurious, what are the virtues we must cultivate and encourage and what we must avoid; the sphere of our personal freedom and its limitations and what methods we must adopt to establish a genuine Islamic community. Islam teaches that unaided intellect and personal experience alone are unreliable and defective guides which can never discover sound ethical values. The purpose of ethical endeavour in Islam is to seek the pleasure of God. In Islam, morality is absolute and unchanging because its laws are instituted by God and not by man. The true Muslim does not change with the changing times but forces the times to conform to his standards.

Islam abhors the doctrine of secularism. The Muslim can thrive only in an Islamic environment which is his duty to establish:

Those who imagine that the morality of Islam makes of it a heavy burden for humanity derive this belief from the tribulations undergone by the individual Muslims living in a society which is not governed by Islam. Under such circumstances the morality of Islam

is a heavy burden; it almost crushes the individuals who live with their pure Islam in the polluted society of ignorance… . A specific environment is indispensable for the life of this concept, an environment with its own specific values.... Islam is a realistic system and it therefore supposes that the people who live according to its path will be living in an Islamically governed society. Without this environment, the life of the individual become impossible or at least extremely difficult. Therefore whoevr wishes to be a Muslim should know that he cannot devote himself to his practice of Islam except in a Muslim environment dominated by Islam. He is mistaken if he imagines that he can realize his Islam in the midst of a society ignorant of Divine guidance.*

Alone among all the religions of the world, Islam created a state dominated by religious and moral motives, thereby demonstrating that political power can and ought to be subordinated to ethical ends and that religion must not be allowed to serve the ends of any political system devoid of moral ideals.

Islam teaches us that one must attain spiritual progress through active participation in normal every day life and for this reason condemns the practice of monasticism, asceticism or celibacy. The doctrines of Islam are characterized by their simplicity, explicitness and highly realistic attitude towards human problems, indulging neither in excessive `optimism nor pessimism, and enjoining moderation in all things. Islam is free from incomprehensible theology or burdensome rituals. Religious creeds shrouded in philosophical complexities may give intellectual pleasure to the few but can never inspire ordinary men and women to be steadfast in virtue.

The racism and nationalism of Judaism makes a mockery of its ethical teachings while Christianity's propagation of the doctrine of the Trinity and the vicarious atonement of mankind's sins by Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) nullifies all its moral values. In Islam there are no such loopholes.

The correct course of life for man is to live in complete obedience to God. It is not for man to determine his mode of worship and obedience; it is for God to decide this. God, being his master, has raised from time to time prophets for the guidance of humanity and has revealed His books through them. It is the duty of man to take the code of his life from these sources of divine guidance.

Man is answerable to God for all his actions in life. The time for rendering an account will be in the life-hereafter and not in this world. The short span of worldly life is really an opportunity to prepare for that great test. In this life, all efforts of man should be centred on the object of soliciting the blessings of God in the Hereafter. He, with all his faculties and potentialities, is on trial. There will be an impartial assessment of his conduct in life by a Being Who keeps a complete and correct record, not merely of his movements and actions and their influence on all that is in the world, but also a full record of his innermost ideas, feelings and intentions. (Pp. 38-39)

According to Islam, God has appointed the human soul as His vicegerent in the universe ...The body has been created, with the sole object that the soul should make use of it in the exercise of its authority and the fulfillment of its duties and responsibilities. Hence the body is not a prison house for the Soul but its workshop or factory and if there is any possibility for the growth and development of the soul, it is only through the use of the powers, machines and instruments provided by this work shop. Consequently, this world is a field in which God has sent us to work and do our duty towards Him…The spiritual development which is possible in this world should not take the form of man turning his face away from this workshop and retreating to some uninhabited corner. Rather, the only form it should take is that man should live and work in it and give the best account of himself. It is in the nature of an examination center for him. Every aspect and sphere of life, is as it were, like a question paper in this test; the home, the family, the neighborhood, the society, the market place, the office, the factory, the school, the law

courts, the police station, the parliament, the peace conference and the battlefield, all represent `question papers' on different subjects which man has been called upon to answer. If he does not take any question paper or leaves most of the answers blank, he is bound to fail in the examination. The only possibility of success would be in

a man's spending his whole time and giving his whole attention to this examination and to attempt as far as possible to answer all the question papers handed over to him. (pp. 106-108) *

Islam is the only religion which preaches a pure and unadulterated monotheism that tolerates no compromises with nationalism, racism, trinitarianism, saint-worship, veneration of images or priesthood. Wholehearted acceptance of the doctrine of Tauhid or the Unity of God makes the believer broadminded and sympathetic to all his fellow beings made by the same Creator, produces an unsurpassed dignity and self respect, makes him indifferent to and independent and fearless of all powers other than those of God, at the same time generating in him humility and modesty The believer in Tauhid is a righteous man because he is convinced that unless he acts justly, he cannot succeed. The believer does not despair and lose hope regardless of adversity. His faith that God is the Master of all the universe, whose powers and mercy are infinite, gives him immense consolation in trouble so that he never yields to pessimism and despondency. Suicide is unthinkable. The true believer will persevere in his work with patience and implicit trust in God to the end. Faith in Islam fills the believer with unrivalled courage. Since he is convinced that his life and property belong exclusively to God, he is ready to sacrifice them at any moment for His pleasure Since God alone can bestow life or death, no weapon.

no man or animal has the power to inflict any harm upon him unless it be God's will. The true believer believes that God has set his span of life in advance so that all the forces of the world combined are powerless to take away his life a moment before the appointed decree. Belief in Islam blesses the faithful with complete serenity and contentment. The believer knows that wealth belongs to God and He gives to whom He pleases. Power, honour, reputation and authority are all bestowed according to His will and it is man’s duty only to strive according to His law. Success or failure depend entirely upon the will of God; if He wills to succeed, no power in the world can prevent Him from doing so and if He does not will it, no power can force Him while atheists and polytheists think that success and failure depend upon their own unaided efforts or the help or opposition of worldly forces. Consequently, they become enslaved to jealousy and frequently resort to sordid practices to try to gain what they want. Thus it can be seen that Islam is not only the sole effective prescription for righteousness but the most potent medicine for mental health as well.

Alone among the religions of the world, Islam made a practical reality of international brotherhood based upon a commonly shared outlook on life, common practices and ideals of conduct. Islam views life as an organic whole not to be shattered into fragments. Islam follows the Muslim in every act of his life-social, political and economic. A Muslim cannot be a Muslim in the mosque and a nationalist or Socialist in politics. He is a Muslim everywhere. Islam is no mere accessory to life but life itself!

Why does not Islam regard the non-Muslim as equal to the Muslim? If Muslims cannot regard Judaism or Christianity on a plane of equality with Islam, the non-Muslim will wonder what kind of treatment Hindus, Buddhists, pagans, agnostics and atheists can expect to receive under Muslim rule.

Islam is a universal faith open to everyone without distinction of race, nationality, cultural or intellectual attainment, social status, age or sex. Because only God can give His faith to whom He will, the Muslim regards every non-Muslim as a potential Muslim. For this reason, he is commanded to be fair and just even to those non-Muslims who are

his confirmed enemies and compassionate to non-Muslims who have never committed any overt, hostile act. Islam commands the Muslim to be kind and just to non-Muslims because if we do not set an example of virtue, how can we expect others to follow us? The conviction that Is lam is the only Truth and that all divergent ways are false and evil, does not make the pious Muslim an arrogant fanatic. The Holy Quran forbids spying, backbiting and heretic-hunting. Nobody is compelled to accept Islam under Muslim rule by force. The Muslim always stands before God in the utmost humility.

Indeed you ought to realize that the pious man is he who is good in God's sight in the mansion of eternity and that is something unknown to man, postponed to the End. . . . (Therefore) you ought not to look at anyone without considering that he is superior to you. Thus, if you see a child you say, `This person has never sinned against God but I have sinned and so he is better than I' and if you see an older person, you say, `This man was a servant of God before me and is certainly better than I' and if be is a scholar you say, `This man has been given what I am ignorant of; then how shall I be like him?' and if he is ignorant, you say, This man has sinned against God in ignorance so God's case against me is stronger and I do not know what end He will give to me and what end to him,' and if he is an infidel, you say, `I do not know; perhaps he will become a Muslim and his life will end in doing good and because of his acceptance of Islam, his sins will be forgiven but as for me - God is our refuge perhaps God will lead me astray so that I become an infidel and my life ends in doing evil and then tomorrow he will be among those brought near to God and I shall be among the condemned' . . . So let fear of the End occupy you and keep you from making yourself, despite the doubt about your death, to be above the servants of God most high. Your certitude and faith at present do not exclude the possibility of your changing in the future for God is the disposer of hearts; He guides whom He will and leads astray whom He will …*

The opposition of Islam to divergent faiths, philosophies and ideologies not directed towards any hatred of individuals but rather the system that has produced them. It is not persons which Islam opposes but perverted values and evil ways of life which lead only to ruin and disaster, but because all non-Islamic ways are wrong, the leaders who personify these values and are fighting with all sorts of cruel and treacherous means day and night to obliterate the truth of Islam from the world, become hateful and therefore must be bated and opposed with every resource we possess.

Hatred of evil and falsehood is not a sin but the highest virtue. Hate is the natural reaction of love. We cannot love a thing without hating what is the opposite to it and our hatred is in proportion to our love. The purpose of hate is to clear the path of love, to approach near to the beloved ideal and to love it more ardently. War, when fought in the service of truth, justice and virtue is a positive good. Pacificism is tantamount to non-resistance to evil and leads to apathy, indifference and all kinds of moral corruption.

Islam teaches that a common faith is the Only bond which can unite the human race. A man should be judged only on the criterion of whether he is believer or a non-believer and how effectively he implements his faith in his practical daily life. Such distinctions as race, nationality or social status are mere accidents of birth over which the individual has no control. Any discrimination on these grounds is rank injustice. The individual is responsible for what he believes and what he does. He is always at liberty to determine his faith and control his behaviour.

Conflicting ideologies, where the interest of one group cannot be attained except at the expense of its rivals, can never be united or even peacefully co-exist simply by proclaiming the fact that all are human beings. The utter failure of such world organizations as the League of Nations and the United Nations is proof of this fallacy. Universal peace and brotherhood can only be attained when the majority of mankind embrace common ideals. Suppose a husband and wife had nothing in common. Everything he considered good, she considered evil; whatever he thought was beautiful,

she regarded as ugly; everything he thought important, she considered trivial; everything he believed was true, she rejected as false-they would be quarreling continuously and could not live together for a single day! They could not reconcile their differences and save their marriage simply by the assertion that both are human beings! Although it cannot be denied that all human beings possess common qualities, in the ideological battle, the human tie alone is not enough!

On what foundation can a lasting reconciliation between Muslims, Jews and Christians be based? We must realize that under the existing circumstances, no friendship is possible. Jewry and Christendom have joined hands to destroy us and all we cherish. Zionism, freemasonry, Christian missionary activity and Orientalism have combined to annihilate us religiously, culturally and even physically. It would be sheer folly to kiss the hands that are beating us!.

Peaceful relations and mutual respect among us can only be achieved through strength. We must cease indulging in apologetics and present the Islamic message to the world honestly and forthrightly. Before we can hope to succeed with Tabligh on a large scale, we must first convert the nominal Muslims into true believers. We must establish a full-blooded Islamic state where the world will witness our precepts translated into action. Finally, we must crush the conspiracies of Zionism, free-masonry, Orientalism and foreign missions both with the pen and with the sword. We cannot afford peace and reconciliation with the Ahl al Kitab until we can humble them and gain the upper hand .